

punishment must not only be firm but fair. During his 28 years on the Court, Stephen Breyer has been a stalwart defender of Americans' constitutional rights.

As I mentioned, years before he was confirmed to the Supreme Court, Justice Breyer sat on the Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, located in Boston. Today, on the banks of Boston Harbor, stands a building that reflects his lifetime of service: the John Joseph Moakley United States Courthouse. Let me add, I knew Joe Moakley. He was my colleague and friend in the House. Then-Judge Breyer helped design that courthouse, and he still has an office there.

The building features a curved glass wall, stretching across tens of thousands of feet, so passersby can peer into the courthouse during the day. It is designed to provide a clear view into the administration of justice. Engraved on the wall in the building are the names of the workers who had a hand in building it. Alongside the names of bricklayers and carpenters, etched in equal standing, is Stephen Breyer.

Those two principles reflected in the building—transparency and equality—have, in many ways, defined Stephen Breyer's legal philosophy and his contribution to America. He understands that our system of justice is stronger when the American people understand how the law works and when the law works for them.

Now, we must carry that tradition forward. Soon, President Biden will announce his selection for Justice Breyer's successor to the Supreme Court—big shoes to fill. But I have no doubt that President Biden will select a jurist who parallels Justice Breyer in intellect, ability, and dedication to public service.

With his retirement, we have an opportunity to confirm another outstanding Justice, one who will indeed champion the freedoms and liberties we hold so dear, one who will also remain faithful to the rule of law and who will approach her work on the Court with the same thoughtful dedication displayed by Justice Breyer.

We don't yet know who the nominee will be, but here is what we do know: No matter the nominee, we will undertake a process in the Senate Judiciary Committee that is both fair and timely. This process will afford Senators an opportunity to review the nominee's record and question the nominee thoroughly, while at the same time ensuring the nominee is treated respectfully and receives a prompt confirmation vote. We owe that not just to this nominee but to the American people.

Let me close by turning to Justice Breyer's opening statement before the Judiciary Committee—July 12, 1994. America was watching when Justice Breyer said: "You are now considering my appointment to the Supreme Court of the United States. That Court works within a grand tradition that has made meaningful, in practice, the guarantees

of fairness and of freedom that the Constitution provides."

He said, "I promise you, and I promise the American people, that if I am confirmed to be a member of the Supreme Court, I will try to be worthy of that great tradition."

There is no doubt in my mind or in the mind of any objective analyst, Stephen Breyer has proven himself worthy of that great tradition.

Whoever his successor may be, I am confident she will do the same.

I want to personally thank Justice Breyer, as a Member of the Senate but as an American citizen first, for his thoughtfulness, his spirit of collegiality and consensus building, and for always working to advance the Constitution's guarantees of fairness and freedom.

ABDUCTION OF MARK FRERICHS

Madam President, 2 years ago, Mark Frerichs, a veteran of the U.S. Navy, from Illinois, was abducted by the Taliban—2 years.

At the time, Mark was working as a civil engineer. For a decade, he had been leading construction projects to benefit the people of Afghanistan. But on January 31, 2020, Mark was invited to a meeting, ostensibly to discuss his next project. When he arrived, he was kidnapped and taken to a stronghold in the mountains of Afghanistan.

For 2 agonizing years, Mark's family has prayed for his safe return. They shouldn't be forced to wait a minute longer.

Last week, Charlene Cakora, Mark's sister, wrote an op-ed in the Washington Post, urging the Biden administration to help finally bring Mark Frerichs home.

My colleague Senator DUCKWORTH and I have made the same appeal to the President many times over to push every possible lever to secure the safe and urgent release of Mark. It seems the administration is committed to do so, and I thank the President for his recent statement.

He said in that statement that the Taliban must immediately release Mark before it can "expect any consideration of its aspirations for legitimacy."

We all pray that Mark is still alive and in good health. So as the administration continues to hold talks with the Taliban on everything from women's rights to combating starvation and famine, I hope and pray that Mark's release will remain on the forefront of those negotiations.

I look forward to continuing to work with the administration on this case. Senator DUCKWORTH and I have worked behind the scenes as best we can, over and over, year after year, month after month, to bring him home.

Let's make sure that Mark Frerichs doesn't spend another year in captivity. Let's bring him home to Lombard, IL, so he can turn 60 in the loving arms and company of family and friends.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, it is an honor to speak today in support of three historic, highly qualified nominees to serve 6 million Ohioans in the Northern District of Ohio on the Federal bench. Each of these nominees brings with them not only impressive legal credentials but also diverse life experiences, empathy, and a deep commitment to justice that will make them excellent district judges. It is why Senator PORTMAN and I together recommended these nominees to President Biden. It is why each of them was voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support. I urge my colleagues on the floor to support them.

NOMINATION OF BRIDGET MEEHAN BRENNAN

Madam President, tonight, we will vote to advance the nomination of Bridget Brennan.

Bridget Brennan is the current acting U.S. attorney in the Northern District. She has served Ohioans as an assistant U.S. attorney for over a decade. She has taken on complex and difficult issues. She has focused on cases that help make our communities safer and more just.

Ms. Brennan has dedicated her career to making the Northern District of Ohio a safer place for victims of human trafficking, including children. She served as the lead prosecutor in the largest juvenile sex trafficking case in the history of the Northern District—a horrific case that included victims as young as 12. She achieved the country's first conviction for a sex trafficker's use of heroin to control his victims, convincing the court to recognize heroin withdrawal as a "threat of serious bodily harm" for the purposes of proving coercion.

She has been a champion for religious liberty. She successfully prosecuted 16 defendants in a single case, under hate crime statutes, for their roles in religiously motivated assaults after they viciously attacked members of Ohio's Amish community. She successfully prosecuted a man for arson and the destruction of religious property after he drove hours just to set fire to a mosque in northern Ohio.

Ms. Brennan received glowing recommendations from those she has worked with and from those whom she has prosecuted. People who she has prosecuted write to her from jail, seeking advice and guidance. She is someone whose commitment to justice is obvious to all of those who deal with her.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Ms. Brennan's nomination.

NOMINATION OF CHARLES ESQUE FLEMING

Madam President, tomorrow, in addition to confirming Ms. Brennan, the Senate will consider the nominations of Charles Fleming and Federal Magistrate Judge David Ruiz, both of whom are nominated to also serve in the Northern District.

Mr. Fleming is an assistant public defender, which is not always the route to being a Federal judge, but it is a key, key, key part of our judicial system. He is an assistant public defender in the Northern District, serving as trial team leader in the Northern District's largest public defender branch.

A career public servant, Mr. Fleming has extensive trial experience in Federal court, having served as a Federal public defender for 30 years. If confirmed, he would be the only Black man currently serving as an active-duty Federal district court judge for the Northern District.

Mr. Fleming has received uniformly enthusiastic reviews from judges he has appeared before and from attorneys he has tried cases against. As a lead public defender, he takes on what his supervisor has described as the "most difficult and challenging cases," as you can imagine. In his cases, he has always displayed exceptional empathy not only toward clients but also toward the victims of crime. One story illustrates his character well.

He was representing an individual charged with committing a violent crime. According to the judge, when making his arguments for what he believed was a fair sentence for his client, Mr. Fleming turned and faced the victim and her family. The judge said Mr. Fleming didn't alter his arguments, but he wanted to accord the victim and her family the dignity of hearing directly from him, the public defender.

That is the kind of empathy and respect we need on the bench. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting his nomination.

NOMINATION OF DAVID AUGUSTIN RUIZ

Madam President, the third judge, David Ruiz, has served as a Federal magistrate judge in the Northern District for 5 years. Before that, he served for 16 years as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Northern District and as a private practitioner.

As an assistant U.S. attorney and in private practice, he took on a wide spectrum of cases. Those who worked with him praised his temperament and his intellect and described him as "unflappable." However, perhaps Judge Ruiz's most powerful endorsement came from the judges who are already seated in the Northern District who selected him to serve as one of their magistrate judges. They selected Judge Ruiz to oversee groundbreaking, multimillion-dollar, multidistrict litigation involving the manufacturers and distributors of opioids, which have done huge damage to families and communities across our State.

He is also poised to make history as the first Latino district judge ever to

sit in the Northern District. If this body concurs, as the Judiciary Committee did, he will become Ohio's first ever Latino Federal judge. He is the grandson of immigrants. He is a descendant of migrant farmworkers who picked fruit in the fields of Texas and Michigan to provide better lives for their families. Judge Ruiz's success embodies the American dream of generations of immigrants.

Finally, I want to thank publicly, in this forum, all of the members of the bipartisan commission who recommended these nominees to Senator PORTMAN and me.

When I first came to the Senate, Senator Voinovich and I established this bipartisan commission process to help identify the best candidates for these important jobs. I am proud of the work that we have done with Senator PORTMAN to continue that tradition through Presidents of both parties.

The members took considerable time out of their busy schedules to identify and interview potential candidates. They undertook this task to ensure that the people living in the Northern District had access to justice and a bench that looks like the people they serve. This is by far the most diverse set of U.S. attorneys, U.S. Marshals, and U.S. Federal judges we have had ever in my State.

I thank the members of the commission for their work. I would particularly like to mention my representatives on this commission: Mohamed Al-Hamdani, Paul Demarco, Barbara Doseck, Dennis Eckart, Kayla Griffin, Jacqueline Johnson, Barbara Lum, Carole Rendon, Carter Stewart, and Margaret Wong. I want to especially thank the chair of our commission, Joyce Goldstein, who put so much effort and time into this and who put so much energy into ensuring this effort was a success. The Northern District of Ohio is better off because of their work.

Dr. King wrote: "[P]rogress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability." Each of these nominees will serve as wheels of progress for our State and for our country. I don't make predictions in politics often, but I am certain that every Member of this body, Republican and Democrat, who votes for these three judges will always be glad that they did.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes so that they can get to work immediately serving the people of my great State.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this week, the Senate will consider three judicial nominees for the Northern District of Ohio.

Before I speak on the nominees themselves, I would like to commend Senators BROWN and PORTMAN for working across the aisle to develop a bipartisan selection process.

All three of these nominees were recommended to the White House through a judicial commission that Senators BROWN and PORTMAN established.

As Senator PORTMAN noted at our hearing on these nominees, the members of the bipartisan screening commission committed significant time and effort to ensure that they recommended well-qualified candidates for the bench.

As a result of that process, we will soon vote on three distinguished nominees.

The first nominee to the Northern District of Ohio is Bridget Brennan.

For almost 15 years, Ms. Brennan has served as a prosecutor, rising through the ranks of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Ohio.

Last year, as a testament to her skills and leadership, she was named Acting U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio.

Ms. Brennan has a wide breadth of experience, having led her office's Civil Rights and Criminal Divisions.

She has received a "Qualified" rating from the American Bar Association, has the strong support of Senators BROWN and PORTMAN, and received a bipartisan vote in the Judiciary Committee.

Ms. Brennan has demonstrated a commitment to justice, integrity, and the rule of law, all of which will serve her well as a district court judge.

We also will be considering Charles Fleming, another highly qualified nominee to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio.

Mr. Fleming is an experienced litigator who has demonstrated a decades-long commitment to ensuring equal justice under the law. He has earned degrees from Kent State University and Case Western Reserve University Law School. After graduating, he spent a year working in private practice before dedicating his career to public service.

For more than three decades, Mr. Fleming has worked as an Assistant Federal Public Defender in the Northern District of Ohio. During this time, he has tried 17 cases to verdict and has gained a truly remarkable breadth of courtroom experience.

As I noted, Mr. Fleming has the strong support of Senators BROWN and PORTMAN. He received a bipartisan vote in the Judiciary Committee. He also has received a "Well Qualified" rating from the American Bar Association.

He is clearly committed to maintaining a fair, respectful temperament in his courtroom and will decide cases based on the law, the facts, and precedent—not on his preferred outcome. He will make an excellent addition to the District Court.

Finally, we have David Ruiz. For more than 5 years, Judge Ruiz has served as a U.S. Magistrate Judge in the Northern District of Ohio. In this role, he has presided over more than 80 cases that have gone to verdict or judgment.

Prior to assuming the bench, Judge Ruiz served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for several years. And before that, he spent 10 years as a litigator in private practice.